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PROCEEDINGS

—OF A—

PUBLIC MEETING,

—HELD—

Thursday Evening, 28th Nov., 1867,

—AT—

VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA.

[FROM THE "DAILY BRITISH COLONIST" OF NOV. 29TH]

The meeting convened at the theatre last evening to return thanks to Messrs Sproat, Fraser, Dallas and other friends of the Colony in London, who were instrumental in framing the Capital Memorial recently published in this paper, was largely and influentially attended. The theatre was densely crowded. His Worship Mayor Trimble took the chair at 15 minutes to 8 o'clock, and Mr Wm Leigh was appointed secretary.

The Mayor having called the meeting to order, briefly stated its object and called upon Mr Robert Burnaby to move the first resolution.

Mr Burnaby said that it was not intended to reiterate the arguments already expressed in favor of having the capital here; but it was intended to return thanks to our good friends in London for the interest they had taken in our welfare, and to endorse their action. Notwithstanding the numerous statements of facts and memorials that had been sent forward, the state of things had been entirely misunderstood at home. Thanks, however, to the gentlemen in London, a plain statement had at last reached

the Colonial Office in the form of the two memorials already made public here. Some time ago there was talk of the formation of a Society at home—a Society that, understanding the wants of the Colony, would see that they were made known in the proper quarter. These gentlemen had supplied that want, and we were at last represented properly in London (applause.) It was impossible for the memorial to be confuted except by misrepresentation or a partial statement of facts. We had experienced the necessity, since Union, of the public offices being here. There was nothing for the officials to do at New Westminster, and their proper sphere of action was at Victoria (applause.) He believed it was only necessary to endorse the views of our friends at home to insure a favorable answer to the memorial. Mr Burnaby then proceeded to move the following preamble and resolution, which were read amid loud applause:

Whereas, certain memorials relating to a subject of the utmost importance to the commercial, industrial, general and political interest of this Colony, namely, the situation of the Seat of Government of the now united Colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, under the name of British Columbia, have been framed, signed and transmitted to Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of

State for the Colonies by Donald Fraser, Esq., A. G. Dallas, Esq., Gilbert M. Sproat, Esq. (gentlemen well known and esteemed) the Hudson Bay Co., the Bank of British Columbia, the Bank of British North America, and other mercantile firms and gentlemen at present in England, but interested in this colony by reason of their being property or bondholders; and whereas, copies of the said memorials, as also a letter from our respected fellow-colonist D. Fraser, Esq., have been published for the information of the public; and whereas it is advisable that an expression of opinion thereon should be elicited, it is

Resolved—That those memorials, as they lucidly, honestly and truthfully portray and grasp the situation, and ably support and maintain the well-understood and expressed wish as well of the people as of the Honorable the Legislative Council of the Colony, namely, that the Seat of Government for the now United Colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia would, for the present at least, be most advantageously and conveniently placed at the City of Victoria, it being situated on the high road of travel to both American and British possessions, the centre of commerce and resort, and the pivot of postal and steamboat communication both domestic and foreign, possessed of superior and established advantages, as well for the internal government of the country as for holding easy and rapid communication with England, Her Majesty's fleet and foreign ports, including the recently formed American Territory of Alaska, we cordially endorse their prayer, and also the political course the memorialists have pursued.

Mr A. J. Langley seconded the preamble and resolution. He was pleased to know that we had friends at home working for us. When we had friends and friends in need, it was proper that we should show a just appreciation of their friendship (applause).

Hon. Dr. Helmcken, who was received with prolonged manifestations of popular esteem, said that he had no idea that any memorial was being drawn up in England until he received a copy of it by mail. The idea originated with a number of gentlemen who had joined together for the purpose of advancing the interests of the Colony. A meeting of gentlemen representing various large interests in British Columbia was held at Messrs Anderson, Thompson & Co.'s office, Billiter Court, on April 20th, 1867, to consider the question of the selection of the Seat of Government of British Columbia. After considerable discussion, during which it was elicited that the highest naval and military authorities acquainted with the country had expressed decided opinions in favor of Victoria and Esquimaux being the Seat of Government, and that public opinion

in England likewise endorsed the same, it was determined to transmit a petition to His Grace the Duke of Buckingham, Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies. A memorial was accordingly drawn up which in a short time received the signatures of seventy firms or individuals. The memorial was presented to the Duke of Buckingham, and a copy was sent out to him (the Speaker) for publication here. He did not publish it then, for the reason that it arrived by the steamer that was to take Mr Birch away. Everyone knows the hostility of Mr Birch to Victorians, and it was decided not to publish it until he had gone, as it was desirable that the Governor should be left to form his own judgment. It was not published for some time afterwards, because it was imperfect, the resolutions of the Council not having reached home at the time the memorial was sent into the Duke. The Governor had received information that such a document was in existence, and that it was in Victoria. Certain emissaries were running around Victoria, in a clandestine way, trying to get the document to show it to the Governor, so as to win his favor; so he (the Speaker) next day sent it to the Governor unauthenticated. Use had been made of it, that he would rather not at present disclose, but might do so at some future time. When the second memorial reached him, the doctor said that he took it to the Governor himself. He had no idea in what spirit the second memorial was received at the Colonial Office, but had been told the memorialists were graciously received, but were informed that no decision would be made until despatches from the Governor had been received. Up to the middle of August, these despatches and the resolutions of the Council had not reached the Home Government. It was likely that Mr Birch took them with him, believing it was advisable that they should not get there before he did (laughter.) Up to the 1st of September, everything went well. Since then he feared that no attention had been paid to the memorial. He feared this from reasons he did not care at present to disclose. He said that Victorians had been represented to the Colonial Office as—well, no better than they ought to be. If the present Colonial Minister was prejudiced by the Executive to regard us unfavorably, as previous Colonial rulers had been brought, he would set us down as a set of scoundrels and the petitions of the people would meet with no attention. He did not believe that New Westminster had any legal right to the capital of the United Colonies. New Westminster was merely capital of British Columbia, not of Vancouver Island. There was no Seat of Government of the United Colonies since union. The capital was not a question resting upon the depth or width of Fraser

river, the sandheads, the harbor of Burrard Inlet, or whether New Westminster was a good site or a bad one for the capital. We had merely to consider what is best for the Colony. What is the Seat of Government for? It must be convenient for the internal government of the Colony, or it must be convenient for communication with foreign countries. With regard to the internal government, it rested upon two points—the convenience of the public and the convenience of the Government. The people had spoken and declared that Victoria was the most convenient point for them (applause.) The Government should be as acceptable as possible to the people. Governments were made to be bothered and should not get out of the way. Victoria had every convenience for the transaction of public business. The Governor ought to be where he can see what is going on. He ought to be a man to encourage, to help and to advise the people, especially in our Colony, where the Governor is the chief executive officer (applause.) With regard to our location with respect to intercourse with foreign ports and neighboring powers, he thought none would dispute (applause). If New Westminster and Victoria were similarly situated with regard to the internal government of the Colony, Victoria was better situated with regard to carrying on correspondence with abroad. Since the acquisition of Alaska by the United States we were like a nut between a pair of nutcrackers (laughter), and complications must soon arise that will render it necessary for the Governor to be accessible from abroad. The life of the Colony was at Victoria and at Cariboo; but Victoria must be the capital because of its location. Every one in the Colony said that Victoria was the best location for the capital. Why, then, was it not fixed here? The only reason that he could discern was because the people of New Westminster said they had bought their lots there with the idea that that was always to be the capital. That promise was fulfilled prior to Union. Victoria had a vested right in Free Trade which was sacrificed by Union, and if New Westminster had vested rights in the town lots, Victoria had vested rights in the maintenance of Free Trade and town lots, too. If it were said that the people of Vancouver Island demanded the abrogation of Free Trade and thereby parted with the vested right, it might be said that the people of the whole country demanded that the seat of Government should be at Victoria, thereby doing away with any vested rights New Westminster might imagine herself to possess. The Executive Councillors were New Westminster lot owners, and he did not believe that the people of this Colony would consent to allow the members of that Council to use the power placed in their hands

for the benefit of the Colony for the purpose of enhancing the value of their real estate. The Government should never be partizan. The Government was using the people's means in opposition to the wish of the people. The people had built up a city here; but found that the Government instead of protecting the interests of the city, was endeavoring to make New Westminster the superior of Victoria [applause]. He did not think it advisable to couple a statement of our grievances in other respects with this question; many of those grievances, he believed, sprang from the unsettled condition of this question and the neglect of Her Majesty's Government, who, he feared, would not listen to the voice of this Colony until it was brought home in a much stronger way than the expressions contained in the memorial. The hon. gentleman retired amid great applause.

Hon. G. A. Walkem, M.L.C. for Cariboo, said this was the first time he had had the honor of appearing before a Victoria audience. The Cariboo miners were interested in the struggle that was going on here [applause]. The people of New Westminster set themselves up as the arbiters, not only of their own town, but of Victoria and Cariboo and the whole Colony. In neither Victoria or New Westminster had he one dollar's worth of real estate; but, as a private individual, he endorsed all that had been said by Dr. Helmcken, and he had no doubt all Caribooites present thought the same way [prolonged applause].

The preamble and resolution were unanimously carried.

Dr. Powell moved the following resolution:

Resolved—That desirous of expressing our gratitude, and our appreciation of the valuable service rendered, we tender our heartfelt thanks to Donald Fraser Esq., A. G. Dallas Esq., Gilbert M. Sproat Esq., and others; the Banks, Mercantile Firms, and gentlemen who have in the hour of need interested themselves in favor of this sadly neglected Colony, for their kind, laborious and meritorious services in its behalf, and whilst begging that they will continue their active exertions, we also pledge ourselves to aid their endeavors as far as our now restricted freedom will permit.

Dr. Powell said that it was pleasant to know that we had friends so able, so willing and so competent to lay before the Home Government a statement of our wrongs and wants, which he believed sprang chiefly from the whims and caprices of those high in position in the Colony [applause]. If the Colonial Office wanted further proof of the feeling of the country, the names of nineteen-twentieths of the people from Victoria to Cariboo could be obtained in favor of Vice

torias as the capital. He believed the system of Government had much to do with our present misery; but he did not rise to give expression to his opinion of the Government and its acts. Messrs. Fraser, Dallas, Sprout and others were largely interested in the future welfare of the Colony, and for the part they had taken in this matter they deserved the hearty endorsement of this meeting and of all well-wishers of the Colony [cheers.]

Mr W. K. Bull had pleasure in seconding the resolution. He had hoped the question would be settled long ago; but it seemed we were just as far from a settlement of the question as ever. We little thought when voting for Union that we should have a fight about the capital. We little thought of those little letters from the *Rue de la Paix*, or the gentleman at New Westminster steeped to the lips with prejudice against Victoria. It seemed quite enough that if Victoria wanted a thing done that it shouldn't be done (laughter and applause). It really seemed to him that the party who stands in our way is the very party who should be with us, and he felt sure that until he was removed there would be no settlement of the question. He believed this meeting would be but a preliminary one to ask the Home Government to recall Governor Seymour. [Prolonged applause.]

The second resolution was carried unanimously.

Mr M. W. T. Drake said that special thanks ought to be given to Mr Donald Fraser, who had drawn up the second memorial, and who having stood by us through good report and bad, now stood ready to do still more in our behalf. We must place our friends in London in a position to state that their action is endorsed by the people of the Colony. He therefore moved the following resolution.

Resolved—That our special thanks are due and given to our esteemed fellow-colonist, Donald Fraser, Esq., in the integrity of whose intentions we have the fullest confidence, for the offer of his services in England, should occasion require. Whilst accepting this generous offer, we nevertheless earnestly and confidently hope that Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies will, according to Constitutional usage, accede to the well-understood wishes of the people, as expressed by petitions, and to the desire of the Legislative Council as shown by their Resolutions, and by so doing in some measure remove the now existing and continually increasing discontent and assist in restoring that confidence which is so much needed, and thus materially aid in reviving the progress and promoting the future welfare of the entire Colony.

Mr John Wilkie seconded the resolution of Mr Drake. Mr Donald Fraser had done his best to secure this place as the Capital; he had devoted not only labor but thought to the subject; and it was but right that we should recognize his services in a proper manner (applause).

The resolution was carried by acclamation.

Mr B. P. Griffin moved the following:

Resolved—That a copy of these resolutions be sent to His Excellency the Governor with the respectful request that he will forward them at the first opportunity to Her Majesty's principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, and that a copy also be sent to Donald Fraser, Esq., in order that the same may be made known to the friends of the Colony in England.

Hon W. J. Macdonald fully concurred in the expressions contained in the resolutions, and was very glad to see that the services of those gentlemen who are exerting themselves in England for our benefit were appreciated. They deserved all the thanks that could be bestowed on them, and more particularly as they are not supposed to feel so keenly the wrongs under which we are labouring as we do, being men of independence, who can live, whatever becomes of the Colony. On the other hand it was to be lamented that it should be necessary to keep up agitation about a matter that should have been settled long before now. When a large majority of the colonists petition in a respectful manner, and these petitions are supported by the Legislative Council, the Executive should bow to such a strong expression of public opinion, especially when no question of a political character is involved, and nothing asked for that would in any way interfere with functions of the executive. At any rate, no partiality should be shown, and questions like this of the Seat of Government ought to be represented to the Home Government in their true light and free from local prejudice.

The resolution was passed without a dissentient voice, and Mr Burnaby moved a vote of thanks to the Chairman.

Hon Dr Helmcken seconded, and in doing so impressed upon the minds of those present the fact that this question was not a local one. It was a question in which the whole country was interested, and upon its issue depended the commerce of the Colony. If the decision was given against Victoria the people must not allow it to rest, otherwise the Colony would dwindle away into insignificance. But he maintained that Her Majesty's Government had no right to determine the question in a manner adverse to the wishes of the country.

The vote of thanks was carried by acclamation and the meeting separated.